

Module 3: Hazardous Materials and Terrorist Incidents

Lesson 10: Terrorism and CERT

Self-Study Guide

Lesson Overview

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There are many new threats that first responders and community members face based on the recent terrorist attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon.

The threat of terrorism using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) presents first-response personnel with a new dimension in planning.

Given the threat of a terrorist attack, everyone must be informed about WMD and the actions that they should take to prepare for and respond to a possible terrorist attack.

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, you should:

- Understand information on the actions that you should take to prepare for potential terrorist incidents.
- Understand CERT protocols for dealing with possible terrorist incidents.

Estimated Time

30 minutes

Contents

This lesson includes the following sections:

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- What is Terrorism?
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- CERT Protocols During Terrorist Incidents
- Self-Care During Terrorist Incidents
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- Lesson Summary

What is Terrorism?

Terrorism is violence against civilians to further political or social objectives.

Preparedness for terrorist incidents is similar to planning for natural hazards. You should prepare yourself and your family by:

- Keeping informed about the terrorist threat and what you should do to protect yourself.
- Making a plan, including how you will communicate with family members.
- Assembling a disaster supply kit.

Be Informed

In a terrorist incident, seconds count. Your welfare and that of your family may depend on:

- Knowing the risks posed by the weapons that terrorists are most likely to use.
- Knowing what to do for each type of risk.

Take time to learn about each weapon so that you understand the dangers and what you can do to protect yourself.

Read the following pages to learn more about biological, chemical, and radiological threats; nuclear blasts; and explosions.

Biological Threat**Overview**

A biological attack is the deliberate release of germs or other biological substances that can make you sick. Many agents must be inhaled, enter through a cut in the skin, or be eaten to make you sick. Some biological agents, such as anthrax, do not cause contagious diseases. Others, like the smallpox virus, can result in diseases that you can catch from other people.

If There Is a Biological Threat

Unlike an explosion, a biological attack may or may not be immediately obvious. While it is possible that you will see signs of a biological attack, as was sometimes the case with the anthrax mailings, it is perhaps more likely that local health care workers will report a pattern of unusual illness, or there will be a wave of sick people seeking emergency medical attention. You will probably learn of the danger through an emergency radio or TV broadcast, or some other signal used in your community. You might get a telephone call or emergency response workers may come to your door.

In the event of a biological attack, public health officials may not be able to immediately provide information on what you should do. It will take time to determine exactly what the illness is, how it should be treated, and who is in danger. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the Internet for official news including the following:

- Are you in a group or area that authorities consider to be in danger?
- What are the signs and symptoms of the disease?
- Are medications or vaccines being distributed?
- Where?
- Who should get them?
- Where should you seek emergency medical care if you become sick?

Protect Yourself

If you become aware of an unusual and suspicious release of an unknown substance nearby, it doesn't hurt to protect yourself. Quickly get away. Cover your mouth and nose with layers of fabric that can filter the air but still allow breathing. Examples include two to three layers of cotton, such as a t-shirt, handkerchief, or towel. Otherwise, several layers of tissue or paper towels may help. Wash with soap and water and contact authorities.

Symptoms and Hygiene

At the time of a declared biological emergency, if a family member becomes sick, it is important to be suspicious. Do not automatically assume, however, that you should go to a hospital emergency room or that any illness is the result of the biological attack. Symptoms of many common illnesses may overlap. Use common sense, practice good hygiene and cleanliness to avoid spreading germs, and seek medical advice.

Chemical Threat

A chemical attack is the deliberate release of a toxic gas, liquid, or solid that can poison people and the environment.

Possible Signs of Chemical Threat

- Many people suffering from watery eyes, twitching, choking, having trouble breathing, or losing coordination
- Many sick or dead birds, fish, or small animals

If You See Signs of Chemical Attack

- Quickly try to define the impacted area or where the chemical is coming from, if possible.
- Take immediate action to get away.
- If the chemical is inside a building where you are, get out of the building without passing through the contaminated area, if possible.
- Otherwise, it may be better to move as far away from where you suspect the chemical release is and shelter in place.
- If you are outside, quickly decide what is the fastest escape from the chemical threat. Consider if you can get out of the area, or if you should follow plans to shelter in place.

If You Think You Have Been Exposed to a Chemical

If your eyes are watering, your skin is stinging, and you are having trouble breathing, you may have been exposed to a chemical.

- If you think that you may have been exposed to a chemical, strip immediately, and wash.
- Look for a hose, fountain, or any source of water, and wash with soap if possible, being sure not to scrub the chemical into your skin.
- Seek emergency medical attention.

Radiation Threat

A radiation threat, commonly referred to as a “dirty bomb” or radiological dispersal device (RDD), is the use of common explosives to spread radioactive materials over a targeted area. It is not a nuclear blast. The force of the explosion and radioactive contamination will be more localized. While the blast will be immediately obvious, the presence of radiation will not be clearly defined until trained personnel with specialized equipment are on the scene. As with any radiation, you will want to try to limit exposure.

If There Is a Radiation Threat or “Dirty Bomb”

To limit the amount of radiation that you are exposed to, think about shielding, distance, and time.

- **Shielding:** If you have a thick shield between yourself and the radioactive materials, more of the radiation will be absorbed, and you will be exposed to less.
- **Distance:** The farther away you are from the blast and the fallout, the lower your exposure will be.
- **Time:** Minimizing the time you are exposed will also reduce your risk.

As with any emergency, local authorities may not be able to immediately provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the Internet often for official news and information as it becomes available.

Nuclear Blast

A nuclear blast is an explosion with intense light and heat, a damaging pressure wave, and widespread radioactive material that can contaminate the air, water, and ground surfaces for miles around. While experts may predict at this time that a nuclear attack is less likely than other types, terrorism by its nature is unpredictable.

If There Is a Nuclear Blast

- Take cover immediately, below ground, if possible, though any shield or shelter will help protect you from the immediate effects of the blast and the pressure wave.
- Quickly assess the situation.
- Consider if you can get out of the area or if it would be better to go inside a building and follow your plan to shelter in place.
- In order to limit the amount of radiation that you are exposed to, think about shielding, distance, and time.
 - **Shielding:** If you have a thick shield between yourself and the radioactive materials, more of the radiation will be absorbed, and you will be exposed to less.
 - **Distance:** The farther away you are from the blast and the fallout, the lower your exposure.
 - **Time:** Minimizing the time spent exposed will also reduce your risk.

Use available information to assess the situation. If there is a significant radiation threat, health care authorities may or may not advise you to take potassium iodide. Potassium iodide is the same stuff added to your table salt to make it iodized. It may or may not protect your thyroid gland, which is particularly vulnerable, from radioactive iodine exposure. Consider keeping potassium iodide in your emergency kit, and learn what the appropriate doses are for each of your family members. Plan to speak with your health care provider in advance about what makes sense for your family.

Explosions**If There Is an Explosion**

- Take shelter against your desk or a sturdy table.
- Exit the building ASAP.
- Do not use elevators.
- Check for fire and other hazards.
- Take your emergency supply kit if time allows.

If There Is a Fire

- Exit the building ASAP.
- Crawl low if there is smoke.
- Use a wet cloth, if possible, to cover your nose and mouth.
- Use the back of your hand to feel the upper, lower, and middle parts of closed doors.
- If the door is not hot, brace yourself against it and open slowly.
- If the door is hot, do not open it. Look for another way out.
- Do not use elevators.
- If you catch fire, do not run. Stop-drop-and-roll to put out the fire.
- If you are at home, go to a previously designated meeting place.
- Account for your family members and carefully supervise small children.
- Never go back into a burning building.

If You Are Trapped in Debris

- If possible, use a flashlight to signal your location to rescuers.
- Avoid unnecessary movement so that you don't kick up dust.
- Cover your nose and mouth with anything that you have on hand. (Dense-weave cotton material can act as a good filter. Try to breathe through the material.)
- Tap on a pipe or wall so that rescuers can hear where you are.
- If possible, use a whistle to signal rescuers.
- Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause a person to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

Make a Plan

What you do during a terrorist incident will depend on where you are at the time.

You should plan for the possibility of a terrorist incident occurring while you are at home, at work, or on the road. If you have children in school, you also need to familiarize yourself with the school's emergency procedures.

Creating A Family Plan

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations.

- It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-State contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- Be sure every member of your family knows the phone number and has coins or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact.
- You may have trouble getting through, or the telephone system may be down altogether, but be patient.

Emergency Information

Find out what kinds of disasters, both natural and manmade, are most likely to occur in your area and how you will be notified. Methods of getting your attention vary from community to community. One common method is to broadcast via emergency radio and TV broadcasts. You might hear a special siren, or get a telephone call, or emergency workers may go door-to-door.

Call the closest chapter of the American Red Cross for emergency information that applies to your community.

Emergency Plans

You may also want to inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time: Work, daycare, and school. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one. Talk to your neighbors about how you can work together in the event of an emergency. You will be better prepared to safely reunite your family and loved ones during an emergency if you think ahead and communicate with others in advance.

Evacuate or Shelter in Place?

Because you will not know until a terrorist attack occurs whether to evacuate or shelter in place, you must plan for both.

To find out what you should do, monitor Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcasts on local television channels, radio stations, or NOAA Weather Radio. Listen to the emergency information carefully and do exactly as directed.

Staying Put

Whether you are at home, work, or elsewhere, there may be situations when it's simply best to stay where you are and avoid any uncertainty outside.

There are other circumstances when staying put and creating a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside, a process known as sheltering in place, is a matter of survival. Use available information to assess the situation. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to take this kind of action.

To shelter in place:

- Bring your family and pets inside.
- Lock doors, and close windows, air vents, and fireplace dampers.
- Turn off fans, air conditioning, and forced air heating systems.
- Take your emergency supply kit unless you have reason to believe that it has been contaminated.
- Go into an interior room with few windows, if possible.
- Seal all windows, doors, and air vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape. Consider measuring and cutting the sheeting in advance to save time.
- Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to seal gaps so that you create a barrier between yourself and any contamination.
- Local authorities may not be able to immediately provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the Internet often for official news and instructions as they become available.

Getting Away

There may be conditions under which you will decide to get away, or there may be situations when you are ordered to leave. Plan how you will assemble your family and anticipate where you will go. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency.

Create an evacuation plan:

- Plan places where your family will meet, both within and outside of your immediate neighborhood.
- If you have a car, keep a half tank of gas in it at all times in case you need to evacuate.
- Become familiar with alternate routes and other means of transportation out of your area.
- If you do not have a car, plan how you will leave if you have to.
- Take your emergency supply kit unless you have reason to believe that it has been contaminated.
- Lock the door behind you.

If time allows:

- Call or email the out-of-State contact in your family communications plan.
- Tell them where you are going.
- If there is damage to your home and you are instructed to do so, shut off water, gas, and electricity before leaving.
- Leave a note telling others when you left and where you are going.
- Check with neighbors who may need a ride.

Learn how and when to turn off utilities:

- Locate the electric, gas, and water shutoff valves.
- Keep necessary tools near gas and water shutoff valves.
- Teach family members how to turn off utilities.
- If you turn off the gas, a professional must turn it back on. Do not attempt to do this yourself.

Plan for your pets:

- Pets should not be left behind, but understand that only service animals may be permitted in public shelters. Plan how you will care for your pets in an emergency.
- Store extra food, water, and supplies for your pet.

Make a Kit

You have already prepared your disaster supply kit for the disasters that are most likely to occur in your neighborhood. This kit may need some additional supplies to help you through a terrorist incident.

For example, you will want to add plastic sheeting and duct tape for possible sheltering in place following a chemical attack. You may also want to purchase dust masks rated "N95" to protect yourself from very small airborne particles.

**Supply Checklist:
Water and Food****Water**

- Plan to have one gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation. Children, nursing mothers, and sick people may need more water.
- If you live in a warm-weather climate, more water may be necessary.
- Store water tightly in clean plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles.
- Keep at least a 3-day supply of water per person.

Food

- Store at least a 3-day supply of nonperishable food.
- Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking and little or no water.
- Pack a manual can opener and eating utensils.
- Choose foods your family will eat:
 - Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables
 - Protein or fruit bars
 - Dry cereal or granola
 - Peanut butter
 - Dried fruit
 - Nuts
 - Crackers
 - Canned juices
 - Nonperishable pasteurized milk
 - High-energy foods
 - Vitamins
 - Food for infants
 - Comfort/stress foods

**Supply Checklists:
Emergency Supplies**

The basics of survival—water, food, and clean air—are essential, but some of the following items may make a time of crisis more comfortable.

Basic Supplies

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Plastic garbage bags, ties, and toilet paper for personal sanitation
- First aid kit
- Map of the area for evacuation or for locating shelters
- A whistle to signal for help
- Moist towelettes

Clothing and Bedding

If you live in a cold-weather climate, you must think about warmth. It is possible that the power will be out and you will not have heat. Rethink your clothing and bedding supplies once a year to account for growing children and other changes.

- Have at least one complete change of warm clothing and shoes per person including:
 - A jacket or coat.
 - Long pants.
 - A long sleeve shirt.
 - Sturdy shoes.
 - A hat and gloves.
- Have a sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person.

Tools

- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or a printout of this information
- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Nonelectric can opener, utility knife
- Paper towels
- Fire extinguisher: Small canister, ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Medicine dropper
- Shutoff wrench, to turn off household gas and water

Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant
- Household chlorine bleach. You can use bleach as a disinfectant (diluted 9 parts water to 1 part bleach), or in an emergency you can also use it to purify water. Use 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented or color-safe bleaches, or those with added cleaners.

Important Family Documents

- Keep copies of important family records such as insurance policies, identification, and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.

Activity: Checking Your Preparedness

Instructions: Think about your current level of preparedness for a terrorist incident. Take a moment to complete the checklist below.

Checklist for Home Preparedness

	Yes	No
Is your family's disaster supply kit stocked and stored where it is readily accessible in an emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you identified a safe room in your home and workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a family communication plan that includes an out-of-State or out-of-area point of contact?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you completed all of the preparation steps necessary to shelter in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CERTs and Terrorist Incidents

The possibility of experiencing a terrorist attack is very low. However, you should consider terrorism a possibility if you are at or near a suspicious incident. Remember that:

- Your safety is the number one priority!
- You should always do a thorough sizeup before taking any action.

If a WMD has been used, CERTs will be very limited in what they can do at the incident.

CERT Protocols During Terrorist Incidents

CERTs operate under two key protocols for possible terrorist incidents:

- As with hazardous materials, terrorist incidents are a "stop sign" for CERT members. WMD responses require special training and equipment.
- If you see any indicators of WMD, leave the area and notify authorities immediately. Take in the whole area as you leave. The area is a crime scene. Anything that you observe may be useful to investigators.

Remember! Do not use a cellular phone or two-way radio if you suspect an explosive device. It could detonate the device!

Self-Care During Terrorist Incidents

If you think you have been exposed to chemical or radiological agents, leave the area immediately. Use basic decontamination procedures to reduce your risk of injury and limit exposure.

- **Remove everything**, including jewelry. Cut off clothing normally removed over the head.
- **Wash your hands** before using them to shower.
- **Flush your entire body** with cool water.
- **Blot dry** with an absorbent cloth. Put on clean clothes.
- **Report to responders for decontamination** when they arrive.

Treating Others

Remember that personal safety is your first priority. During a terrorist incident, take self-protective measures only. Do not attempt to treat victims in the contaminated area. Doing so will expose you to the contamination. Tell people who are leaving the area to:

- Use the basic decontamination procedures.
- Wait for responders who will perform complete decontamination.

Knowledge Review



Instructions: Select the correct answer. When you are finished, turn to the next page to check your answers.

1. You are driving by your city's convention center when you hear and see a large explosion. Smoke is pouring from the building. Glass and pieces of concrete are everywhere. No one has left the building but many pedestrians appear to be severely injured. What should you do?
 - ☐ Park in a safe place and begin helping the victims.
 - ☐ Call 9-1-1 from your cell phone.
 - ☐ Move to a safe place upwind and uphill.
2. You have just received a call from your neighbor telling you that there has been an explosion downtown and that terrorism is suspected. As a CERT member, what should you do?
 - ☐ Respond immediately to the downtown area.
 - ☐ Call the other members of your CERT team.
 - ☐ Monitor EAS information on your radio or TV.

Knowledge Review: Answer Key



Instructions: Compare your answers to those shown below.

1. You are driving by your city's convention center when you hear and see a large explosion. Smoke is pouring from the building. Glass and pieces of concrete are everywhere. No one has left the building but many pedestrians appear to be severely injured. What should you do?

- ☐ Park in a safe place and begin helping the victims.
- ☐ Call 9-1-1 from your cell phone.
- ☒ **Move to a safe place upwind and uphill.**

There is little that you can do in a WMD situation, and your safety is your first priority. You should leave the area immediately. **Move to a safe location uphill and upwind** from the incident. Do not try to help the victims in the building because of the danger to yourself. There could be falling debris and possibly a secondary explosive device. Call authorities from a landline. Do not make any calls from your cell phone because doing so could detonate a secondary explosive device.

2. You have just received a call from your neighbor telling you that there has been an explosion downtown and that terrorism is suspected. As a CERT member, what should you do?

- ☐ Respond immediately to the downtown area.
- ☐ Call the other members of your CERT team.
- ☒ **Monitor EAS information on your radio or TV.**

CERTs are not trained and should never respond to terrorist incidents. In the event of a suspected terrorist incident, the best thing to do is to **monitor the EAS on a radio or TV** and follow the instructions provided.

Lesson Summary

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This lesson presented information on the actions that you should take to prepare for potential terrorist incidents. The lesson also covered CERT protocols for dealing with possible terrorist incidents.

Many of the preparedness steps are the same as those you should take to reduce your risk from natural disasters or other manmade threats.

Next Lesson

You have completed this lesson. You are now ready to begin Lesson 11: Introduction to Disaster Medical Operations.